LABOUR MONTHLY

A Magazine of Labour Unity
Founded 1921
Editor: R. Palme Dutt

Sanity in Storm * R.P.D.

Socialist-Communist Relations * Sydney Silverman, M.P.

Hungary—Cold War Heritage * Ivor Montagu

The Invasion of Egypt * Quæstor

Green Light for Landlords * Katherine Hood

Labour Discussion Forum

December, 1956

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(Owing to pressure of space a further instalment of the Letters of Jenny Marx has been unavoidably held over. Angela Tuckett's usual cover feature will be resumed next month. For October donations list see page 547.)

Notes of the Month

Sanity in Storm

'The experiences of the war, as the experiences of every crisis in history, and every great calamity and every sudden turn in human life, dull and break one set of people, while they enlighten and harden others.'

LENIN.

THE present dangerous international situation places on all of us the greatest responsibility. In a flash the world, which was moving towards peace—and which can still assuredly be guided to resume that march—has been lit with the flames of war. The stormy events which have taken place have aroused violent and contradictory emotions. Tragic sufferings have befallen masses of ordinary people in Egypt and in Hungary. Deepest sympathy will be felt with all who have undergone this suffering by every decent man and woman. But the truest expression of sympathy is not to fan the flames of war. Hard as it may seem to those swept by emotion, it is necessary to understand, and to understand politically, what is happening and why it is happening, in order to be able to play an effective part. The present situation requires the most sober, serious responsible effort of political judgement in order to reach common ground for united activity to save humanity from the dangers which now threaten, and guide the path forward to the aims of peace, friendship between the peoples on the basis of national sovereignty and equality, and international co-operation. In the

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present Notes the attempt will be made to undertake a constructive examination of present problems and controversies solely with a view to furthering these aims which are common to all of us. For this purpose four questions will be considered: (1) what has happened to peaceful co-existence? (2) the Middle East in crisis; (3) Hungary and Europe; (4) the future perspective.

I. WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE?

Since Geneva

Sixteen months have passed since the Conference of Heads of States at Geneva raised the hopes and enthusiasm of mankind. Geneva represented a landmark, a high point of the endeavour to turn away from the decade of cold war and enter on the path of negotiation and peaceful co-existence. What made possible this beginning of change from the policies of the preceding decade? Four main factors may be discerned. First, the mass will for peace in all countries without exception; it was precisely in the moment of the general election that Sir Anthony Eden made his sudden somersault from his previous rejection, reiterated only a few weeks before, of the proposal for an immediate top-level meeting, and secured the assent of the United States which had also up till then rejected it. Second, the failure of the 'policies of strength', that is, the previously proclaimed aims of the Western powers to impose their will by superior military strength, by the threat of the atom bomb, or nuclear superiority; the recognition of what was called the 'nuclear stalemate', that the myth of Western nuclear superiority was an illusion, and that a nuclear third world war could only mean measureless destruction. Third, the speed of constructive economic advance of the socialist world, very much exceeding the rate of advance of the capitalist world, and the consequent failure of all the policies of blockade and trade bans to disrupt it, as well as the strengthening of unity demonstrated in the reconciliation of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Fourth, the speed of advance of national and colonial liberation, revealed in the portent of the Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian States, representing the majority of the world's population now moving outside the orbit of imperialism, and taking a firm stand for peaceful co-existence and against all the imperialist military blocs. All this compelled the Western statesmen to revise their former approach and agree to the Geneva top-level meeting, and at that meeting accept the *principle* of peace-

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ful co-existence, i.e., that all issues between the capitalist and socialist worlds should be settled by peaceful negotiation to be carried forward at further conferences on specific burning questions, especially for a European settlement and for disarmament.

Sequel

What has gone wrong since then? How is it that within less than a year and a half a state of war and tension has arisen more serious than any since Korea and Dien Bien Phu? Does this mean that Geneva was a hoax and an illusion, and the idea of peaceful co-existence an unattainable will o' the wisp? This is the conclusion which the advocates of the cold war, who have never concealed their hatred of Geneva and all it stood for, have continuously sought to draw. But this conclusion is false. Grave as is the present situation, it remains true that the progressive forces of the peoples for peace, of socialism and of national and colonial liberation, and of the international working class, continue to advance in the world balance. An irreversible change in the world balance has taken place and is continuing; and the very strength of the world reaction to check the war of Anglo-French imperialism in the Middle East is testimony to this.

Two Negative Factors

But two negative factors developed in the situation following Geneva. The first was a certain relaxation in the level of activity of the peace forces owing to a widespread misconception of the measure of achievement at Geneva and the tasks which remained to be fulfilled. The second was an intensified activity of the war-making forces, to revert to their old positions, as shown in the stone-walling tactics at the Foreign Ministers' Conference in the autumn, and even to seek to promote new policies of strength by sectional military alliances, as in the Middle East, precisely because they were aware that their world position was weakening and their old domination crumbling, and they regarded Geneva as a dangerous setback whose effects must be counteracted.

Partial Relaxation of the Peace Movement

There is no doubt that in the period immediately following the Geneva summit conference there was a certain relaxation of the level of activity of the peace movement which had helped to make Geneva possible. This was shown in the much lower response to

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the serious situation created by the deadlock of the Foreign Ministers' Conference in the autumn. The relaxation was not general throughout the peace camp. The Soviet Union multiplied its efforts for peace by ceaseless and tireless initiatives, both through its constructive proposals at the Conference for a general European settlement, withdrawal of all occupying troops and ending of sectional military pacts, and its successive proposals for disarmament, banning of tests and banning of nuclear weapons, as well as through concrete steps, such as the withdrawal from Porkkala, the extension of economic aid to the newly independent countries, and the drastic cuts in armed forces and arms expenditure. The Bandung countries, with Nehru in the forefront, were no less tireless in their work for peace. In the Middle East resistance to the imperialist military pacts was intense. But among the peoples in the imperialist countries there was a perceptible relaxation, a belief that peace had been won at Geneva and that the danger of war had passed.

Some Illusions on Peaceful Co-existence

The *aim* of peaceful co-existence was confused with its *achievement*—in place of recognising that, while the door had been opened to negotiation, every concrete problem had still to be solved. These illusions were fostered by the imperialists ('there ain't gonna be no war', as Macmillan said). The fallacy was encouraged that the so-called 'nuclear stalemate' had banished the threat of war, so that there was no longer supposed to be the same urgent need to ban nuclear weapons. The truth that in the present stage of imperialism war is no longer inevitable, because the strength of the peace camp and the popular forces is now capable of preventing it, was vulgarised into a denial of the truth of the inevitability of imperialism leading to war *unless* the active role of the peoples prevents it. So long as imperialism exists, the drive to war will continue and break out in a hundred forms. The danger of war will never be finally banished until imperialism is replaced by socialism on a world scale. Until then it depends entirely on the ceaseless vigilance, unity and active role of the entire peace camp, that is, of the socialist countries, the non-imperialist countries, the international working class and the supporters of peace in the imperialist countries to check the drive to war and defeat the policies leading to war, and to work for the adoption of policies corresponding to the aims of peaceful co-existence.

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War Plans in Europe

At the same time as there thus took place a certain relaxation among some sections of the peace movement (and it must be recognised that during the past eight months there also took place a certain preoccupation of the world communist movement with internal questions of readjustment following the 20th Congress), the war-making forces, which had regarded Geneva as a defeat, intensified their activity. This was already revealed in the deadlock at the Foreign Ministers' Conference at Geneva in the autumn. The directive from the summit conference had instructed them to prepare a plan for European security and *within this framework* the unification of Germany with free elections. The Western powers sought to reverse this directive, and insisted on the unification of Germany first, with the aim that an Adenauer Germany should be aligned in N.A.T.O. The Soviet Union proposed a European Mutual Security Treaty, including all states in Europe, and on this basis the annulment equally of N.A.T.O. and of the Warsaw Pact, the withdrawal of all occupying troops from Europe East and West, and the peaceful reunification of Germany with free elections. In the light of the present situation in Europe, with the dangerous problems which have arisen, is there any supporter of peace who will not regret that these Soviet proposals for a peaceful Europe were not adopted, but were blocked by the Western powers, and that public opinion in the West was not alert enough and active enough to reverse this blocking of peace in Europe? Instead, remilitarisation of Western Germany under Hitler's generals as a part of N.A.T.O. was pressed forward. Openly aggressive aims were expressed by the circles around Adenauer in relation to Eastern Europe. Finance was poured forth for the openly avowed aims of subversion in Eastern Europe. These conditions complicated the task, which could otherwise have been peacefully and harmoniously carried out, of readjusting and carrying forward the relations of the Soviet Union and People's Democracies in the new stage following the 20th Congress; and the dangerous consequences have been demonstrated in present events.

War Plans in the Middle East

The intensified war drive of the Western powers after Geneva was even more openly carried forward in the Middle East. The advance of national liberation in the Middle East aroused the alarm and anger of the Western imperialist interests, which regarded the maintenance of strategic domination in the Middle East as essential

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for their monopoly control and exploitation of the oil wealth of the region, at the same time as they sought to complete N.A.T.O. by a corresponding chain of military encirclement in the Middle East. Already the oil nationalisation in Iran had been nullified by the establishment of a savage military dictatorship to put through the consortium agreement. A no less ferocious dictatorship tied Iraq to Britain. The Baghdad Pact had been established to combine Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq and Iran in a military alliance with Britain. Now the pressure was turned on Egypt. The struggle of the Egyptian people had cleared out the British occupation from the Canal Zone, which it had been vainly attempted to maintain with 80,000 troops. The demand was presented to Egypt to support the Baghdad Pact. When this was rejected the supply of arms was refused to Egypt, in face of the superior military power of Israel, demonstrative large-scale military attacks and threats of 'preventive', i.e., aggressive war; while it was made clear that abundant arms would be forthcoming if Egypt joined the Baghdad Pact. Thus the supply of Czech arms to Egypt in September of last year was not the first step in the development of the dangerous military situation in the Middle East, but the reply to the British military moves and a defence of Egyptian national independence and the interests of peace. Jordan rebelled against the similar pressure to be dragged into the British Baghdad Pact, and cleared out Templer and Glubb. As the next instrument of pressure to bring Egypt to heel, finance was ostentatiously denied to Egypt for the Aswan Dam. Egypt replied by nationalising the Suez Canal Company. Britain and France thereupon proceeded to mobilise for war on Egypt.

II. WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST

A War of 'Naked Aggression' (Nehru)

Why did Britain and France unloose war on Egypt at the end of October, in open defiance of the United Nations Charter, with no pretence of treaty obligations or self-defence, with a twelve hours ultimatum to Egypt to yield territory to the aggressor and accept foreign occupation, with no formal declaration of war, and with a murderous bombing offensive which heralded the concentration of the military, naval and air might of two major imperialist powers against a small and relatively defenceless country, which was already the victim of aggression? 'In all my experience of foreign affairs', declared Nehru, 'I have come across no greater case of

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naked aggression'. The successive pretexts offered by the Government spokesmen were so flimsy and contradictory as to arouse derision even from Government supporters. It was not a war 'to protect British nationals'; no British nationals were in danger. It was not a war to protect 'freedom of the Suez Canal'; the Suez Canal was freely operating; the attempt to sabotage its operation by withdrawal of foreign pilots had failed; a peaceful negotiated settlement guaranteeing freedom of passage had already virtually been reached; it was the war that blocked the Canal. It was not a war to 'throw a protecting shield between Egypt and Israel'; for the Israeli invading forces were already 100 miles in Egyptian territory, while the Anglo-French forces were thrown, not between the contending armies, but in Egypt's rear to stab Egypt in the back and paralyse defence against the aggressor. The 'policeman', as Mr. Gaitskell said, intervened to sandbag the 'householder' struggling with the 'burglar'. All these pretexts could deceive no one. Even the control of the Canal was only the expression of a larger issue; since the freedom of the Canal was an eminently negotiable issue capable of peaceful settlement. The essential real aim was, as Mr. Gaitskell correctly said on August 2, when he had originally supported British military preparations, to establish 'mastery of the Middle East'.

Anglo-French and United States Imperialism

Why did Anglo-French imperialism, which had in general previously tailed behind the United States and even at times counselled moderation against American adventurism, now spring to the forefront as the most bellicose and reckless section of the Western imperialist camp, even in defiance of the wishes of the United States? This corresponded to the position of the British and French Empires as the most heavily weakened and declining world empires, most desperate in face of the sweeping advance of anti-imperialist liberation, crippled in economic and financial resources and consequently unable to compete in this sphere with the United States, and therefore resorting to the final desperate gamble of military action to reassert their mastery. France had already lost out in South-East Asia and the Middle East, and was losing in Northern Africa, with half a million troops engaged in a brutal colonial war in Algiers. British troops were already engaged in Cyprus, Kenya and Malaya. In the Middle East the former British monopoly domination had had continuously to give way to American advance. The savage Anglo-French aggression on Egypt was a

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characteristic last thrust of dying empires. But the disassociation of the United States created a complication for the Anglo-French imperialists. The United States could seek to reap advantage from the situation by simultaneously deploring the Anglo-French aggression, while opposing proposals for effective combined steps to bring the aggression speedily to an end. This division between the major partners of the Atlantic Alliance revealed the depth of the contradictions into which the imperialist camp has fallen in face of the world advance of socialism and of national and colonial liberation.

World Resistance

But the most striking new feature about the Anglo-French military invasion of Egypt was the unity of world opposition which it aroused. Not only the whole Arab world, not only all Asia with Nehru in the forefront, not only the socialist third of the world, but mass opinion in every country, and not least in Britain, united to denounce Eden's aggression and stood by Egypt. In this sense we are far from the days of Tel el Kebir and Gladstone's bombardment of Alexandria. The tiger has not changed his stripes, but he is no longer lord of the jungle. 'Never since 1783,' wrote the *Observer*, 'has Britain made herself so universally disliked'. The United Nations resolution calling for withdrawal of the Anglo-French-Israeli invading forces was carried by 64 to 5—a majority without parallel, and representing, especially if China's voice were added, the overwhelming majority of the world's population. By contrast, it may be noted that the subsequent United Nations resolution for the withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Hungary could not even secure the two-thirds majority necessary to give it validity even under the illegal 1950 Korean revision of the Charter, and was only carried by states representing a minority of the world's population. When the Anglo-French imperialists defied the call for the cease-fire and withdrawal, the storm rose higher; the Soviet Notes threatened combined action to compel compliance; and within twenty-four hours the aggressors sounded the cease-fire.

Cease-Fire Is Not Yet Peace

The cease-fire in the Middle East represented a first step in halting the aggression, but not yet the removal of the aggressors or restoration of peace and Egypt's rights. All informed political comment (*The Times, Manchester Guardian, New York Times*) agreed that the Soviet Notes threatening action were the decisive factor in compelling the sudden cease-fire. The cease-fire at the

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height of the operation aroused fury among all the most aggressive reactionary sections in Britain and France, who dubbed it a 'second Munich'. The Soviet Union by its prompt intervention had opened the way to peace in the Middle East. But the Anglo-French military forces are still at the time of writing astride the Canal, and even appear to be reinforcing their position; while Israel's expansionist ambitions have been openly proclaimed. The United Nations token contingents appear to have been so far used, not to compel withdrawal by the invaders, but to complete the foreign occupation of the Canal in close association with the aggressors. Hence the situation continues dangerous in the extreme, as Nehru has justly stressed, until the invading forces are withdrawn. The battle to restore and maintain Egypt's national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity against the assault of imperialism is not over, but is advancing to its most critical stage.

The Switch

It was at this point, when the mass movement against imperialist aggression in the Middle East was reaching to heights unsurpassed since the days of Spain and the Second World War, when Sir Anthony Eden and the Tory Government were shaken and their impending downfall predicted in many quarters, that the supreme manoeuvre of reaction was launched to endeavour to short-circuit the menacing campaign on Suez, divide the progressive forces and restore the cold war front and bipartisanship with Toryism on the issue of Hungary. Already the Labour Front Bench, which had originally supported the military measures preparing the war on Egypt, and had only been compelled to revise its policy by mass pressure, had sought to damp down the movement with the warnings against industrial action and the pledge to support an alternative Tory Government. Now the cease-fire was treated as the end of the war in the Middle East. 'Victory!' screamed the *Daily Herald* across its front page, and promptly turned all its fire and venom to the familiar cold war channels of incitement against the Soviet Union over Hungary.

From Egypt to Hungary

While the new campaign was mainly pressed forward by the Tory Government, the B.B.C., the newsreels and all the millionaire press organs which had supported the aggression on Egypt, it was shared by those sections of the Labour and trade union leadership

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which had originally supported the military moves against Egypt and had only been compelled from below to move to a phase of expressing opposition. Mr. Gaitskell in his broadcast called for the restoration of the unity of the Atlantic Alliance of Western imperialism over the issue of Hungary. The Labour Front Bench began again to show its hand on Egypt. Kenneth Younger, leading for the Labour Party in the parliamentary debate on November 8, declared:

> There would have been no criticism by the Opposition had the Government, if necessary, taken immediate action and asked for the sanction of the Security Council on it as in Korea.

The Tory Government Minister, Mr. Butler, was able to reply to the debate on November 13 by quoting Mr. Shinwell in support of the Government's war on Egypt:

> The Government had an inestimable advantage in the observations made by Mr. Shinwell who had said:
>
> > 'I think it will be shown that our action, although drastic and fraught with difficulties and dangers, will prove in the long run to have been right.'

It is in the context of this international situation that the significance of the campaign of reaction over Hungary needs to be understood. What was in question was not sympathy with the Hungarian people—this would come ill from these pastmasters of colonial wars and aggression—but a political move to sidetrack and divide the rising anti-imperialist anti-Tory mass movement, which was beginning to menace the whole existing establishment, and to restore the bipartisan cold war front. Half the difficulties and problems which have affected many progressive supporters and socialists over the events in Hungary have arisen from seeing these events in isolation, and not as an integral part of the present tense and critical international situation.

III. HUNGARY AND EUROPE

Hungary

The events in Hungary have aroused deep concern and controversies among all progressive sections, including among communists. This is understandable. That a people's democracy, after an outstanding record of socialist construction and economic and cultural advance from a previous basis of landlordism, fascism and war ruin, should at the end of eleven years have aroused such widespread popular discontent that the regime became untenable on the basis of its own internal forces and support, is an appalling situa-

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tion, which the undoubted facts of Western externally organised penetration and subversion during the whole cold war period are inadequate to explain. That the Soviet armed forces, which already twelve years ago had to sacrifice so many of their bravest fighters to rescue Hungary from fascism, should have to make new sacrifices again after twelve years against the same enemy and the same White Terror which had held Hungary in its grip before for a quarter of a century without the people being able to throw it off, and that such intervention should inevitably also appear to come into opposition to genuine national sentiments and genuine grievances of wide popular sections, this is a tragic situation alike for the Hungarian people, for the Soviet people and for international socialism.

Responsibilities and Action

All the responsibilities and causes without exception, including the record of the internal regime and party leadership in Hungary, and the relationships of the Soviet Union to Hungary and of the Soviet Communist Party to the Hungarian Workers' Party, will have to be subjected, and will be subjected to merciless review in order to draw the lessons and ensure that such an outcome shall never occur again. After the fall of the first communist regime in Hungary thirty-seven years ago such a review was made, not only of the external causes through the foreign intervention, but of the internal faults of the regime. How much more so today? But such an analysis is no substitute for action. Is it true that there was a serious menace of fascism and counter-revolution, of the armed forces which were conducting White Terror unchecked and reviving anti-semitism, and of the reactionary sections associated with Cardinal Mindszenty, gaining the upper hand and taking over control in the confused conditions of the last days of October and the beginning of November to restore a new version of the old Horthy regime? Is it true that the Nagy Government was proving wholly impotent to counter this menace, and was in fact capitulating day by day more completely to the enlarging and increasingly aggressive demands of anti-socialist reaction? And if this is true, and there was a menace of a Fascist Hungary arising in Europe, was it just and correct, and corresponding to the true interests, not only of the Hungarian people, but of all the peoples of Europe, of the international working class and of peace, that the Soviet armed forces, stationed in Hungary under the peace treaties arising from the war against fascism, should take prompt action to prevent the

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re-emergence of a Fascist Hungary in the heart of Europe? These are the central questions of controversy, irrespective of opinions on the causes leading to this disastrous situation.

True and False Sympathy

When the first communist-socialist regime in Hungary was smashed by the invading foreign armies of the Entente, by the invading Rumanian and Czech armies under a French general, to instal the White Terror that slaughtered tens of thousands, was there the slightest hint of protest against such foreign armed intervention from the statesmen of the West or from the great millionaire press organs which today raddle their painted faces with counterfeit tears and crack their brazen throats with howls of professed emotional indignation over the intervention of the Soviet armed forces in Hungary? On the contrary, they gloated and exulted in the glorious victory over bolshevism. The emotions of these great 'organs of opinion' are turned on and off as from a tap, not according to genuine feeling, but according to the cold, calculated class interests of their masters, the lords of money. They care no more for the sufferings of the Hungarian people than they have cared for the sufferings of the Cypriot, Kenya or Malayan peoples, or the hundreds of thousands of colonial peoples done to death by imperialism. Every honest democrat and socialist will therefore assess at its true worth the shameless hypocrisy of the clamour raised by these organs against the Soviet action in Hungary. This does not thereby diminish or invalidate the sincere emotions of many progressive people, socialists and communists, who are deeply concerned over the events in Hungary or doubt the justice of Soviet action. But it does mean that these elements need to be on guard against allowing their emotional feeling to cloud their political judgement from seeing the international class alignment which is involved in the present situation in Hungary.

Pioneer of Fascism

Hungary was the first fascist state. Memories are short. Because fascism had ruled Hungary for over a quarter of a century, and had been succeeded by only eleven years of an alternative state, some would like to assume that the possibility of the restoration of fascism had disappeared and could only be a figment of the imagination. But in fact the internal forces of the Hungarian people had proved incapable of conquering fascism. This is a harsh fact, but true.

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The Hungarian militant working class, led by the illegal Communist Party, had a glorious record in the fight against fascism. But the militant working class was a handful in a sea of reaction, backwardness and oppression. The Hungarian Social Democratic Party, to its dishonour, signed a treaty with the White Government pledging co-operation for 'the Magyar standpoint' and 'collaboration with bourgeois society' and opposition to strikes, in return for permission to exist. Nationalist demagogy, anti-semitism and anti-Russian incitement were the weapons of the clique of large landowners, militarists and wealthy Church interests which ruled Hungary.

Unstable Change

During all these two and a half decades of fascism and White Terror in Hungary, spreading over all Eastern and eventually Central Europe, did the Soviet Union intervene? Never. The people of every country must conquer their own class enemy by their own internal strength. The hard path must be trodden, however slow and painful. Such is the principle of Marxism-Leninism; and Lenin always insisted that only the overriding requirements of the international situation could ever in abnormal circumstances take precedence of this principle. Poland tore away and annexed Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia. The Entente by armed force overthrew the Soviet Baltic Republics. The Soviet Union steadfastly pursued the path of peace, non-aggression and non-intervention. Only when fascism in Central and Eastern Europe, organised in the Axis and under Hitler, became an *external* menace to the life of the peoples of all Europe and the world, the military destruction of fascism became the inescapable task. The Soviet armies, in alliance with the Western armies, destroyed the military power of fascism in Europe. What was to follow? It was universally agreed and pledged by the allies, and set out in the Declaration of Europe, that fascism must never be allowed to arise anew—an absolute pledge irrespective of the internal forces within each country. Therefore new types of regime must be established, despite the weakness and immaturity of the popular forces, to withstand fascism. Such new regimes must be on a different social basis from the social basis of the large landowners, militarists and political power of the Church which had maintained fascism. So came into being the People's Democracies in Eastern Europe. It was an abnormal situation. The working people came to power, not by their own strength, but through the destruction of fascism by the Soviet armies. The superhuman task was set them, despite the weakness of their forces,

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to carry through the most rapid social reconstruction and political transformation to bar the road to the return of fascism.

What Went Wrong?

It was a superhuman task. The Communist Party at the outset had only ten thousand members. The rest had to come from those who had accepted or even collaborated with fascism, or from the youth who had never known the conditions of revolutionary illegal struggle. Let us not fail to recognise the gigantic achievement of socialist reconstruction and popular advance that was in fact accomplished. All the evidence indicates that in the early years there was wide popularity of the new regime and the social and economic reforms. But in the later years it is clear that grave evils developed which alienated the people. It is possible that there were political errors in endeavouring to advance too rapidly from the coalition basis (the Communist Party had only one-quarter of the votes in the first election) to predominance of the United Workers' Party; the Chinese example could now teach much on this. There were economic errors in the endeavour to press too hard the pace of industrialisation, the essential basis of economic independence. The Soviet people also had to go through hardships to carry through the necessary accelerated industrialisation; but they had deep revolutionary strength and experience. There was no such revolutionary maturity in Hungary. So the methods of bureaucracy and repression began to displace the methods of persuasion and conviction. The cold war exacerbated this situation. It was in 1947 that President Truman proclaimed the cold war. It was in 1948 that the special security police was established in Hungary. During the later years of Stalin it is clear that the evils and excesses of the administrative and police apparatus which developed in the Soviet Union were reproduced in Hungary. A menacing situation developed which profoundly weakened the party and struck at the essential links of the party, the class and the masses of the people.

Correction and Confusion

After the death of Stalin a drastic review and correction was imperative. Such a review and correction had proceeded in an orderly fashion, step by step in the Soviet Union, during the three years preceding the 20th Congress. It would appear that a similar process was begun in Hungary in the summer of 1953, with the replacement of Rakosi by Nagy as Premier and the shift to increased

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production of consumer goods to raise standards; and some economic improvement of conditions followed. But the clock was then again turned back; Rakosi returned; the priority for heavy industry was resumed, with the necessity of new sacrifices. We cannot yet know from here the reasons for these shifts. But it is clear that in the outcome the process of necessary change and reform of the regime was dangerously delayed. A destructive fight of factions developed in the party. On this situation broke the 20th Congress, not after three years' preparation as in the maturer Soviet Union, but like a bolt from the blue in the still immature people's democracies. The Soviet people were strong enough in revolutionary experience to take the shock without shaking. In the less stable people's democracies considerable confusion and some anti-Soviet tendencies followed.

Paralysis of the Party

In the Hungarian party the battle of opposing forces reached extreme forms; some leaders resisted necessary changes; masses of idealistic youth, furious against bureaucratic and repressive abuses, and without previous experience of revolutionary struggle and fascism, were swept forward with torrential demands for freedom in all spheres, with no realisation of the hard conditions of class dictatorship or the menace of reaction. During October it became clear that differing organs of the party press and apparatus were passing into the control of opposing sections in the internal battle. Order; counter-order; confusion. The party became paralysed and destroyed as a political factor. In these conditions the great anarchic confused popular upsurge developed with no effective organised party of the working class to lead it, but only the compact, highly organised, long-prepared groups of counter-revolution ready to take advantage of the confusion.

Popular Mass Movement or Counter-Revolution?

Was the Hungarian upsurge a popular mass movement or an attempted *coup* of counter-revolution? The question presents a false alternative. Both elements were present. The masses who surged on the streets were demanding reforms of evils; there is no reason to believe that the majority desired the destruction of their socialist achievements or the return of the big landlords and capitalists. There were genuine grievances and deep national feeling; there were also factors of backwardness affecting sections, the con-

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tinued political influence of the Church, or the susceptibility of sections to the old traditional nationalist anti-Russian and anti-Jewish slogans. But in this mass ferment there was also at work, as the only organised force ready to exploit the confusion, the armed gangs of counter-revolution, with the key forces previously trained and equipped from the West, and with a manifest conscious and unified political and military strategy. There was a manifest military strategy with the concentration on the Western frontier and Western Hungary. There was a manifest political strategy, which began with echoing the popular reform slogans, and day by day began to insert the slogans of reactionary demagogy, of nationalism, anti-Russianism, anti-semitism, Western orientation, and finally freedom from socialism. The Nagy Government capitulated step by step, until finally reaction was in the open, with a non-socialist majority in the Nagy Government, Cardinal Mindszenty's broadcast for the restoration of capitalism and landlordism and the political powers of the Church, and the White Terror roamed the streets. The battle opened.

No Danger of Fascism?

'There was never any real danger that the Hungarian revolt would end in the restoration of the Horthyite Fascists', announced the *New Statesman* on November 10. No danger? Why ignore the declaration of Premier Nagy who already in his broadcast on October 25 stated that 'counter-revolutionaries have carried out an armed attack against the people's democratic order?' Why should they know more than Anna Kethly who hesitated to join the Nagy Government because, as she declared on October 30, 'among the revolutionaries there are right-wing Fascist extremists who would dearly love to capture our national revolution?' Why ignore the warning of West German Social Democracy in their organ *Vorwaerts* that 'Nagy was without authority' and that 'the insurgents were being excited to extremism under the influence of reactionary and fascist elements'? Why ignore the boast of the *Daily Mail* correspondent on October 25 that he dined in Budapest with the leaders 'who for a year plotted this week's revolt'? Why ignore the *Daily Express* correspondent's report on October 31 that 'lynch law' ruled in Budapest, and that the White Terror was slaughtering, not only security police, but Nagy supporters, and that 'innocent people are being killed'? Why ignore the warning of the *Jewish Chronicle*, through its Vienna correspondent, that 'dark elements'

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were 'stirring up hatred against Jews in general', (it should be explained that Rakosi, Gerö and other prominent Communists were Jews, and the agitation against them bore a certain anti-semitic character) and that 'at the outbreak of the insurrection the crowds shouted "Turn Out the Jews" '? Bonfires of Marxist literature in the squares and streets. White Terror stringing up the corpses of men and women suspected of Communism. 'Turn Out the Jews'. But of course no 'real menace' of fascism, says the *New Statesman*. Perhaps those who wish to deny the menace of fascism imagine that in these circumstances a nice good Social Democrat would have come along and put everything right. Vain illusion. So also after the smashing of the communist regime in Hungary in 1919 a social democratic government was installed for a transitory instant to give place to Horthy fascism.

Soviet Role

But even if it has to be admitted that there was a real menace of a Fascist Hungary, it is argued, the Soviet armed forces should not have intervened to support the Kadar Government in its fight against fascism and counter-revolution. We are not discussing here the more controversial question of the first intervention in response to the appeal of the preceding government (a question which would require a much fuller examination of the facts to reach a final judgement); since the whole present international controversy has turned on the armed assistance to the Kadar government. Is not this, it is asked, interfering in the internal politics of another nation, 'exporting revolution', 'imposing socialism by foreign bayonets' etc. —all contrary to the elementary principles of communism. Certainly any such action would be contrary to communism. The Soviet Union has no wish to intervene in the internal politics of any other nation. The Soviet soldiers would prefer to stay at home. But the question of the restoration of a Fascist Hungary is not a mere Hungarian question; it is a European question, affecting the lives of all the peoples of Europe. The Soviet Union stands pledged, since 1945, in solemn agreement with all the allies, never to allow the restoration of fascism in Europe. The Soviet Union is more faithful to its pledges than the Western allies have been in respect of Adenauer's Germany, where Hitler's generals are back in power and rearmed. If a Fascist Hungary were to arise, alongside Adenauer's Germany, as the first step to a new fascist bloc of Central and Eastern Europe, the Second World War would have been fought in vain. In that hour of mortal peril those who are so

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loud-spoken today to denounce the Soviet armies, just as they did over Finland, would once again be thanking heaven for the Soviet armies as their saviours. Let us not tread that path again.

For a Political Settlement in Hungary

The military destruction of the menace of fascism and counter-revolution in Hungary is only the first step. On that indispensable foundation follows the decisive task, the political task, to create the conditions for the political forces of the Hungarian people, after the danger of fascism has been dealt with, to find their way forward to build anew their democratic order and their national independence, purged of the evils and excesses that stained the record of their first people's democracy, to restore their shattered economy with the willing help of the peoples of the whole world, and to maintain and carry forward their socialist achievements. That task is no easy one after the bitter conflicts of the preceding period. We shall not help them best by fanning the flames of cold war. Let us strive rather, not only to approach the problems of the Hungarian people with understanding and sympathy and practical help, but above all to seek to create such conditions in Europe as shall banish for ever the curse of the cold war, which has had such adverse effects on the internal development in every country, end the opposing sectional military pacts and all foreign military occupations in Europe East or West, and open the way to the peaceful advance of all the peoples of Europe in co-operation.

IV. TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Common Aims

Our immediate tasks in this menacing and critical international situation are clear. First, whatever the differences of opinion on the events in Hungary, we must not let the progressive forces be so divided on this issue as to be sidetracked into a return to bipartisanship with Toryism and to the fatal paths of the cold war. Second, on the Middle East we must do everything to ensure the speediest withdrawal of the Anglo-French-Israeli invading forces, and the restoration of the full national independence and territorial integrity of Egypt, as the first step to a peaceful settlement in the Middle East. Third, in Europe we should reinforce the campaign for a Mutual Security Treaty to replace the existing N.A.T.O. and Warsaw Pacts and end all foreign military occupation, as the indispensable path in order to make possible the peaceful reunification

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of Germany, lighten the burden of armaments and ensure the most favourable conditions for peaceful democratic development in all the countries of Europe. Fourth, we should press for the earliest possible urgent convening of a top-level meeting of the representatives of the Great Powers, of the United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union, together with India and China, to carry forward the work of the Geneva meeting of last year, ease international tension, and especially concentrate on the all-round reduction of armaments and banning of nuclear weapons. For us in Britain these aims are bound up with the fight to rally the unity of all sections of the labour movement and the people in order to speed the defeat of Toryism and open the way to basic changes in Britain's policies from the Eden Government's policies of war and worsening standards of the people. Toward these aims let us work for the widest labour, communist and progressive unity.

November 18, 1956 R.P.D.

Development Fund, October Donations: £23 5s. 0d.

REGULAR CONTRIBUTIONS came from: Anon, 'Whitchurch', 1s; 'Socialist Sailor', £1; 'A Highgate Reader', £2; D. Rees (pre-paid); A.M.T., for Fernando and Guilherme, Portugal, 1s; Olivia Greene (pre-paid); E. D. McCallum, 5s; R. McLeod, 5s; H.G.B., 2s; J. A. Smith, 2s 6d; The Humphreys Family, 8s; 'Republican', 3s; S. Morrissy, £1; T. Flood, 2s 6d; Q. Elliot, 6s; S. Mill, 10s; D. M. Carke, 10s; D. H. Strathern and Friends, 6s; Royston Green, 3s 6d; L'Humanité, 3s; H. Tinkler, 5s; D. Smith, 5s; M. Philibert, 10s; J. McDonald, 4s; J. A. Purton, 7s 6d; E.J.B., 10s; P. N. Brinson, 10s.

'Electrician', November prize-winner in our Labour Discussion Forum: 'I don't want to take money from *LM.* which is in such need of it. Pay it into the fund'. £1 1s 0d.

OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS include: F. F. Snowdon, 2s; W. J. Fairman, 1s; L. A. Conley, 5s; W. Wallace, £1 2s; G. Page, 2s; H. Ross, 7s; W. G. Greenslade, 3s; P. W. Burton, 1s; G. B. Chambers, 2s; M. Walsh, 3s; Anon, Essex, 1s; W.M. (Canada), 15s; K. E. Houghton, 2s; W. M. Dunne, 1s; J.H.C. (Canada), 15s; J. V. Ruffell, 12s; H. Ullyatt, 5s; F. Love, 12s; J. McCallum, 12s; C. G. Roberts, 12s; G. Cameron, 12s; A. McMillan, 2s; W. Storer, 2s; E. Maguire, 2s; J. Walkinshaw, 10s; J. Smith, 3s; 'R.J.F.', 2s; R. F. Willetts, 2s; A.A.H. (U.S.A.), £3 11s; J. B. Thompson, 3s.

Our thanks to you all.

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SOCIALIST - COMMUNIST RELATIONS II.

SYDNEY SILVERMAN, M.P.

(*In our October issue we published* Thoughts on Socialist-Communist Relations *by Mr. R. H. S. Crossman, M.P. Below we publish a further contribution, by another member of the Labour Party Executive, Mr. Sydney Silverman, M.P. In October we pointed out that 'the solution of present problems can only arise, not simply from the laying down of a ready-made programme by one group or section for the acceptance of the remainder, but from the contribution of all engaged in the struggle towards clarifying differences and forging a common immediate programme'. The present article, and that by Mr. Crossman, are therefore printed for discussion; and we invite comments from our readers.*—ED. *L.M.*)

WHEN Moses and Aaron led the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage—the Egypt-Israel conflict has a long history—they sojourned in the wilderness forty years before reaching the Promised Land. So the generation which began to build the new nation knew Pharaoh and his taskmasters only by tradition. It was the first successful proletarian revolution in recorded history.

When the 20th Congress of the Soviet Union Communist Party met in 1956 they were in much the same position. No one under 50 or 60 years old remembered the Tsar or the collapse of feudalism. Only a handful of leaders had known Lenin. Trotsky was, and apparently still is, the nearest Marxian equivalent to the Christian Devil: a fallen angel, leader of the powers of darkness against the true revolutionary Light. The great names of the old Bolsheviks executed in the middle 1930's were largely forgotten, erased from the pages of the history they had helped to make.

Some remained, some who had survived and some who had taken part in the great quarrel on the correct, that is, the winning side. But the great Stalin, whom all had known, was dead 'and none so poor to do him reverence'. His achievements were not exactly forgotten or denied. They had ceased to be the important thing about him. What was important was that he was held responsible for what can only be fairly described, though no one called it that, as the betrayal of the revolution.

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Whether that was wholly just they—and I follow their example—did not stop to ask. The future was more important than the past. If the revolution had lost its way, it must find itself anew. The way forward was the way back—back to democracy (at least within the party), back to collective leadership, back to freedom to know, to utter and to argue freely according to conscience, always provided that the fundamentals of a Socialist society were not questioned. Back, in short, to Lenin.

It is easy to be critical, to be cynical, to doubt. Perhaps there is no one in the Soviet Union, now Litvinov is dead, who realises the enormous damage, the bitter, broken-hearted disillusion among young Socialists all over the world, by the 'errors' so glibly denounced by Khrushchov. It was not only the great purge trials of 20 years ago. It was not only the Hitler-Soviet Pact. It was not only the bitter struggles between Social-Democrats and Communists over more than a generation in so many parts of the world. There were more recent matters: Tito and Rajk and Kostov and Slansky. How can anyone in Russia, to whom some, and some only, of these things have been known a bare six months, appreciate that to many good Socialists the world over Communism had come to signify, not another road to Socialism, but the denial of human freedom, without which Socialism has no significance whatever?

But if cynicism is easy, it is also useless. To learn the ways of freedom of course is hard for the generation brought up in the wilderness. If the Promised Land is to be won the promise must be fulfilled by those who win it. It is not for the rest of us to stand on the side-lines and sneer. It is to my mind ridiculous to argue that Socialists in non-Communist lands, while they must seek and maintain friendly relations with Communist governments, must have no truck with Communist parties in countries governed by Communist governments. After all, the persons are by definition largely the same persons. What is the sense of conceding the right of Communist countries to seek Socialism by Communist roads, of conceding the necessity of friendship with them, and then seeking to erect a new Iron Curtain between Communists who are members of Communist governments and Communists who are not? If a country is building Socialism by Communist paths, it must be conceded that in that country there is no need and no use for a Social-Democratic party.

But if that is conceded, then Communists—here and elsewhere—must concede that in a country where, by tradition, by history, by

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social organisation, for any other reason, the road to Socialism must necessarily be the social-democratic road, there is equally no need and no use for a Communist party. Certainly, there is no need or use of such a party in Great Britain. At the best, it seems only to sow doubt, distrust and division, to undermine the self-confidence and faith in itself of the mass working-class organisations: the Labour Party, the Trades Union Congress, the Co-operative Movement. At the worst, it is a mere apologist for another country and another way. If every country has the right to find its own way to Socialism, there can be only one way in each country.

Finally, it is important in these critical days to realise that no country will ever find its way to Socialism, or to anything but slavery whatever it may be called, by the tanks, guns, and bombers of another country. It must find its own way, or not find the way at all. No one knew it better than Lenin. Back, in that respect too, to Lenin!

All this is written with a frankness that may sound harsh. But the harsh facts must be accepted if we are to build better. The world is full of people who hate Socialism, in any of its forms, not for its errors but for its achievements. Yet the world, and Social Democracy, owes much to Communist achievement, both in war and peace. Humanity has a future only in so far as Socialism has a future, since Socialism alone can abolish the twin evils of poverty and war. Socialism has no future if Socialists fight one another. We must co-operate. But if we must co-operate, we must accept those facts on which alone co-operation is fruitful.

FROM THE *LABOUR MONTHLY* OF 25 YEARS AGO

U.S. IMPERIALISM AND CHINA

America's policy of staking all on the Kuomintang butchers of Nanking in order to subjugate China to the financial and industrial power of U.S.A. has left them with a broken reed compared with the club they expected in Chiang Kai-shek, T. V. Soong and Co.

From *British Workers and War in Manchuria*,
by George Hardy, December, 1931.

(The 1956 Index has been printed separately. It will be inserted in Bound Volumes; single copies will be supplied on application to The Manager, 134, Ballards Lane, London, N.3.)

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HUNGARY–COLD WAR HERITAGE

IVOR MONTAGU

'THE heroic and patriotic struggle of our brother nation for democracy and sovereignty has been, in conditions of anarchy, exploited by fascist elements hostile to the people'. Thus the Polish Democratic Party (November 6, 1956) summarises the dreadful tragedy of Hungary.

No one but feels the appalling character of the tragedy, its setback for the cause of socialism as well as its calvary for the Hungarian people. No one who doubts the crimes and errors of the leadership of the Communist Party of Hungary and the grave mistakes and blunders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in relation to Hungary, stemming from the state of affairs a corner of which was revealed at the 20th Congress, errors castigated in the statement of the Chinese Communist Party.

If other need there were to chasten and convince us, there is the universally attested breadth and popularity of the uprising in its early stages, the confusion and resentment that has delayed the end of fighting and return to work. Certainly we must ourselves feel a part responsibility for the misfortune when we reflect on the easy optimism with which we let illusions based on hope blind us to the complexity of establishing democracy in Hungary and the degree of the old government's failure in its task.

Let us not blind ourselves by new emotions, horror and remorse. Foster no new illusions. Truth must be our lifebelt. Do not let us imagine that in Hungary all that was needed to avoid bloodshed was an absence of fighting; to attain peace, a Soviet withdrawal; to secure freedom, elections on the English County Council style. Life, alas, is not so simple. Nor is an Hungarian reactionary like dear Mr. Popplewell, the nice old boy at the Conservative village fete; or 'fascist' in Hungary a mere term of unreflecting propaganda, such as one hurls at a mounted policeman whose horse steps back upon one's toe.

Reaction in Hungary is and ever has been brutal, cruel, grasping. Fascism in Hungary was the first to be established anywhere in Europe. It rode in then, too, on the back of foreign arms and infiltrations and the chaos of a weak and faulty effort at democracy, but it lasted twenty-seven years. It had a deeper, solider mass basis even than in Germany or Italy. The feudal lords were

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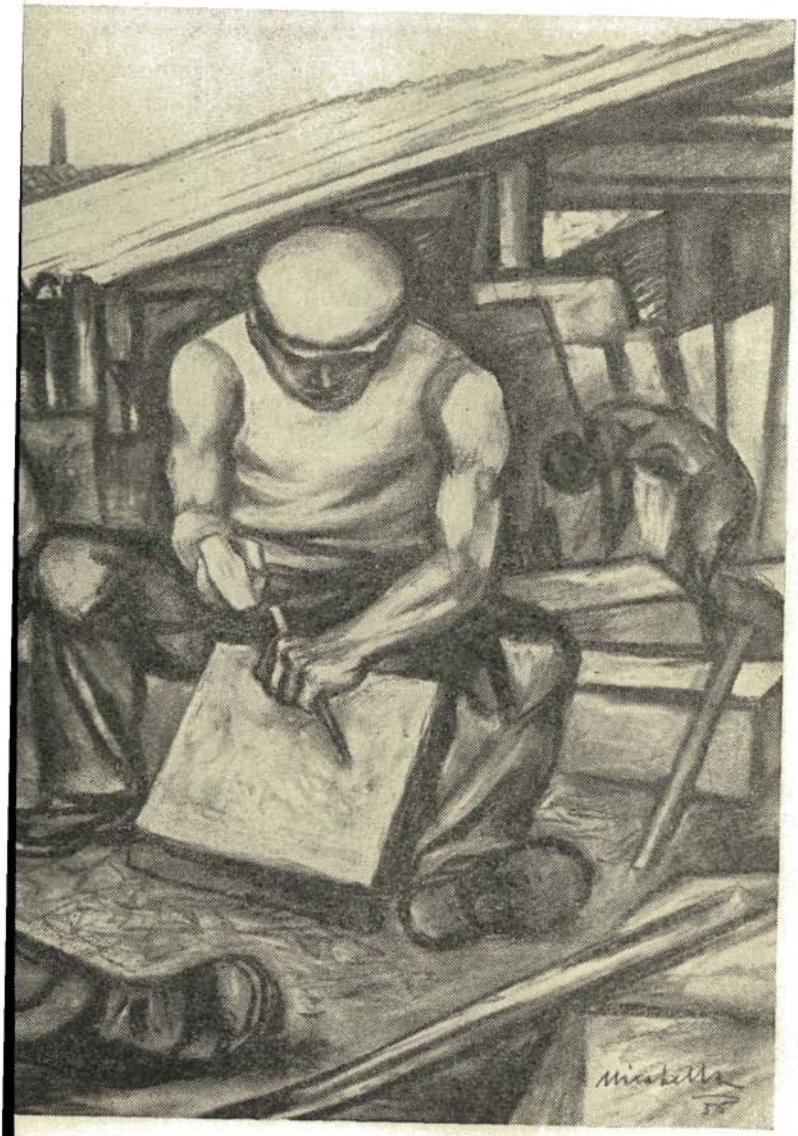
by Saro Mirabella (Italy), 1956



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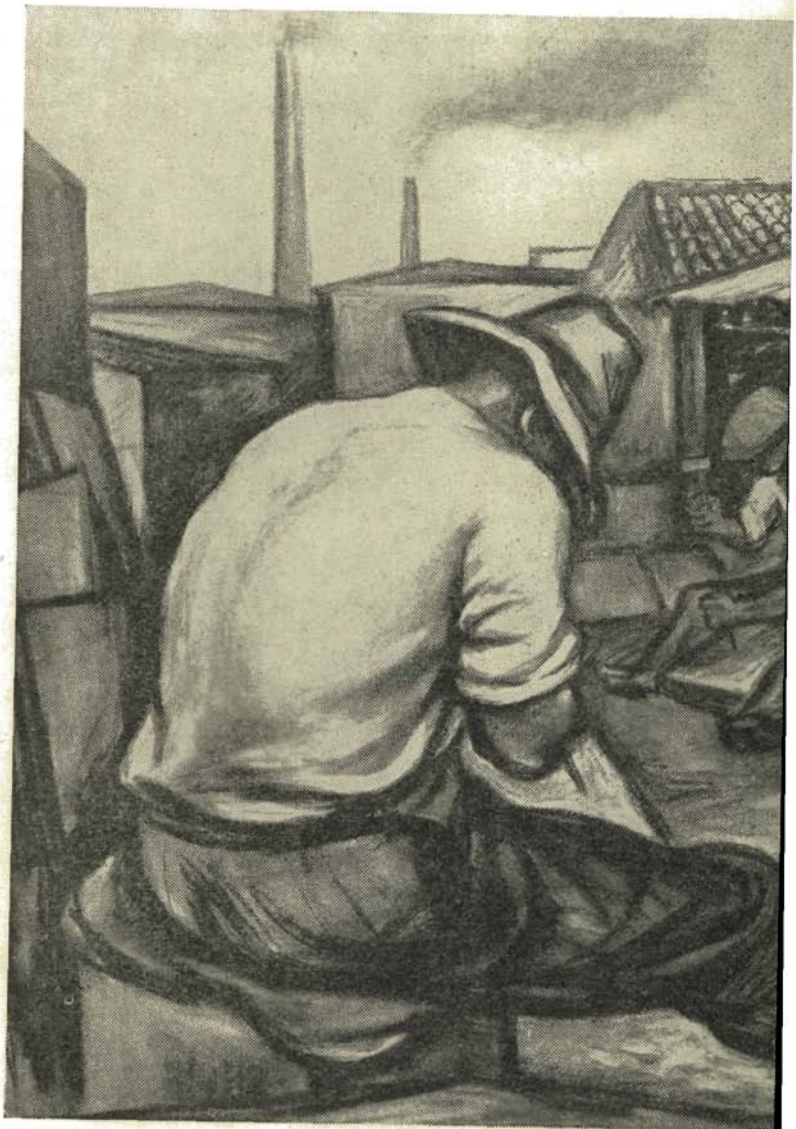
Stonemasons



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born to arrogance, and the church a means of sanctifying their *droit de seigneur* and the lash as right divine.

In the White Terror of the twenties, Budapest ran with blood, and the corpses of Jews were fished out of the Danube every night. In the forties Hungarian armies burned and pillaged to the Donets and the Don. Hungary was the only one of Hitler's allies where a substantial part of the population not only willingly but even enthusiastically took part in the massacre of Jews and Gipsies; almost certainly a bigger part knew about it than in Germany itself. I must try to speak without passion. Two brothers of a friend of mine were dragged to the crusade in the Ukraine as menials and there shot down. And one of my very closest friends escaped twice by a miracle, once successfully jumping from a train transport to Auschwitz and once evading and hiding while two thousand other Jews, their task of digging trenches completed, were slaughtered by a handful of aristocratic boys.

As *Daily Worker* correspondent I went to Belsen. Who has forgotten the vileness of that hell-pit? What few may know is that, when the British soldiers reached Belsen, it is true the camp was administered by a handful of Nazi S.S.—who afterward paid for their crimes in public trial—but that the camp was guarded by Hungarian soldiers who were found sitting on the walls taking desultory pot-shots into that pitiable seething mass of living skeletons. Much to the disgust of the British prosecuting team, *these* men were never tried, the British military authorities refused to permit it. They ensconced them in comandeered German villas where, retaining their uniforms and sidearms and acquiring fratcompanions, they lived a life of Riley as 'allied refugee personnel'. I know, because I photographed some of them. This favouritism was the beginning of that Cold War policy whereby any criminal became a hero and a pet to foster so long as he was munition for the anti-Soviet cause.

In formation and with more than sidearms, fostered by American 'charities', such men dwelt on in Austria as 'freedom fighters', preparing for the day that has now come.

In the early days of People's Democracy, Jewish dealers were lynched at Hungarian cattle markets. This happened more than once. When some Hungarians said, as they not infrequently did to Western visitors 'this Government is run by Jews', what several meant was that this spoilsport Government was the first in Hungary that had ever punished such lynchings.

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How do you begin change in such a country? I think our fault has been to blind ourselves to the difficulty. It has to be brought from medievalism into light. But who will teach morality? The church? Its Chief, Cardinal Mindszenty, was the No. 1 anti-semite, the sort of medieval prelate-vizier whose like we have not seen in Britain for 400 years, when his equivalent had inevitably to have his head cut off in the normal course of establishing our way of life. The Communist Party? But who is to comprise it, who will teach the teachers themselves? We knew that there was a mass Communist Party. The name of Communist is to us a proud one, we assumed to such a party virtues forged in the fires of sacrifice and struggle. But where did this one come from, after the prisons and murders of a generation had taken their toll? It had to grow from almost nothing, and it did not escape infection. I was in Hungary as the first free elections were preparing in '46. I interviewed the Communist leaders. They accused: 'The Socialists are recruiting fascists'. I went to the Socialist leaders. They were indignant. 'But it is the Communists who are recruiting fascists.' They gave me names and places, chapter and verse. 'We have to do it too, in self-defence.' I have no reason to suppose that either group was lying to me. And after that, Communists and Socialists merged to form the Hungarian Workers Party. Let no one think that the germs of tragedy could have been disinfected even in ten years.

I visited Hungary often. Perhaps twenty or thirty times in the course of 33 years. In the small corner of my experience, I met, together with the good in the new Hungary, still also injustice, callousness, arbitrariness, tyranny. I pressed cases, and in some got redress. Was it wrong to suppose to myself—what was undoubtedly the case in Russia during a similar period of development—that the bad was mainly due to a shortage of cadres, the best men were kept for important sectors, not the ones I had to deal with? Things would get better. I think they did at first. But then, for Hungary, came the worsening years revealed by the 20th Congress.

Why should events in Hungary so surprise us? After all, this was always the most evident pattern for the starting of the Third World War, the U.S. Congress did not vote its hundred million dollars to Department 'Operation X' with more than lip-service thoughts for charity, nor 'X' send to no purpose its leaflets, trained saboteurs and arms. The programme was precisely mapped. To create, and take advantage of, discontent and confusion; then the partial rising and the pretext for Western intervention. Berlin 1953 was a rehearsal. We have always expected it to be tried again in

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Germany. There, with the mass basis of lingering fascist elements and the historically inculcated Teuton contempt for Slav, it was always plain that the coming of an armed Western Germany would create a situation for a spark to ignite at any chosen time. We forgot the history of Hungary. A country no less poisoned for generations with chauvinistic glorification of its superiority to the Slavs. Not a victim of Hitler, liberated, like Poland or the Czech parts of Czechoslovakia, but an accomplice of Hitler, frustrated.

Not that the traditionally despised Russians had not brought overwhelming advantages to the Hungarian people that should have outweighed the defects. But how short are memories when contrasting with the prejudices of history. Count Karolyi told me how some peasants complained to him in 1946: 'The Russian soldiers took our chickens'. 'But they gave you your land,' he replied. As the years passed under pressure of the industrialisation that was accelerated as answer to the cold war, instead of living standards continuing to rise as they had at first, inevitably 'the Russians' were blamed for every hardship and the chickens seemed to become bigger.

For the Russians and the small kernel of true Communists together did bring with them to the Hungarian youth one benefit whose gift proved fatal to the givers. The ideals of Communism. A Fuhrer can stay and stay, as Horthy had done. He teaches obedience and the church blesses it. But a Communist Party that does not live up to its ideals can never stay. As a Communist Party, it must at least teach justice and the freedom and the equality of men and nations. And, if it fails to realise them, it creates appetites it fails to satisfy. This one, failing abominably, destroyed itself.

All this accounts for the nation-wide character of the uprising in Hungary, and its course. It does not yet account for the involvement, at the side of those who at last saw which way the wind was blowing, of the Soviet troops. After all: is not each people entitled to find its own road to socialism, and if it will not, is it not so that socialism cannot be transported on bayonets? But one corner of the picture remains yet to be painted. The fact of the place: the heart of Europe. And the fact of the time: the crime of Eden. The Soviet troops acted first at the behest of the old government. Whether the latter was right to ask them to or not, we have no means of knowing. On the few facts we know, it may have been its last, colossal, error. When the new one of Nagy asked them to stop, they did. When it asked them to withdraw from Hungary, they replied: this could be negotiated, it was a matter for all the Warsaw powers

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to negotiate together. Was this correct? The Warsaw Treaty is for mutual protection of more than U.S.S.R. and Hungary. The stationing of troops under it is agreed by, and for the protection of, all the countries in the region. And every honest person knows the dangers against which it protects are real.

But when the Soviet army acted again, all was already changed. Nagy was floundering and the armed populace breaking up into a thousand trigger-happy gangs. White Terror had begun in street and house. The victims already dangled from the lamp-posts; and the man-hunts and beatings-to-death that had started with 'Security Police' (as the correspondents at first called them) had gone on to 'any' Communists, to all kinds of active workers and supporters of the people's power, even to their families. The only real organised force was that activated by the paladins of United States Freedom Radio and their ex-Belsen friends ensconced in Györ, pouring across the frontier 'Freedom Fighters', flags and putsch instructions, prepared, as some admitted to the correspondents, together with the rising, a year or more.

The broadcast appeals from Budapest radio were no longer for 'neutrality', or even 'U.N. observation', but directly for 'help from the West'. To red-hat all, the ex-'innocently imprisoned' Cardinal, a few short hours from jail, called urgently for overthrow even of Nagy, abolition of national ownership, return of landed estates, resurrection of the whole unholy crew. The spearhead of Department X was taking its leap hundreds of miles eastward, the poison on its blade a Hungarian feudal fascism whose leaders proclaim territorial demands, and the return of former estates from every neighbour: at the south edge, the Banat from Yugoslavia; at the tip, Transylvania from Rumania; at the north edge, Slovakia, pinching that unhappy land once more, exactly as was done at Munich-time, between the S.S.-officered armies in the north (of Adenauer) and the Horthy gangsters of the south. Was this not the very sort of situation with which the Warsaw Pact was designed to deal? And just at this moment Eden chose finally to destroy the factors he had bidden the U.S.S.R. rely on for security, rather than on its own power and alliances: his personal good faith ('I think I have convinced them that we do not want war,' he said of Bulganin and Khrushchov after Geneva): the United Nations Charter (Eden proclaimed in parliament that he would proceed with his aggression despite the record General Assembly vote against him of 60-odd against 5): pacific public opinion (true, we were opposing him, but we had not yet stopped him, and he had already shown he could

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get enough hours' start on us to do untold damage with the H-bomb he expects to have next spring, suppose the Suez missionary spirit seize him once again).

Werth said in *Reynolds News,* even at that moment, that the issue still trembled in the balance for the Soviet forces, to engage or to withdraw. Let those who pretend to know that engagement was not an elementary duty, alike to Socialism, humanity and peace, reflect upon the speed with which terror was making its come-back, and our own failure to prevent its earlier preparations, *as well as* the errors and mistakes of others that made its opportunity. That the response was right, inevitable, does not of course abate its tragedy. A tragic measure, yes, because even though the danger here to peace be checked, even though Hungary eventually win a new chance and a second start—fascism averted and White Terror stopped—even so the cost in embitterment, shock and mistrust born of prejudice will be heavy, not only in Hungary but much more widely still. Don't dream that the Soviet Union was not well aware of these grim consequences and heavy price. But life, alas, is not so simple. The idea that, in the manner in which these events developed, there could possibly have been, *at the final stage,* some alternative Soviet attitude which would have saved bloodshed and ensured Hungary's national and democratic freedom, while likewise protecting peace, is totally unreal.

With many this is an honest illusion. But in many mouths, alas, it is a dishonest pretence: at its most evil, the scheduled and automatic cry, foreseen for such a stage in its programme, of Dulles' 'Freedom Fighters', as Operation X unrolls to war; at a less wicked but still calamitous level, the desperate improvisation of the harrassed Edenites to escape the consequences of their crimes, and of embarrassed right-wing and habitually anti-Soviet Labourites to evade the otherwise necessity of united opposition to Eden. In any case this pretence is crocodile and hypocritic; beamed by a thousand radios to Hungary it helps foment the confusion that still muddles the honest protest of youth and workers, their just national and democratic demands, with the vile purposes of those who seek only to restore the fascist past or, failing, to bequeath a maximum hate, and by fostering this confusion it deliberately multiplies the chaos and bloodshed it purports to bewail.

For how can hate and war benefit Hungary, since, in destroying all, it must destroy Hungary too?

The true, practical path to advance the freedom and democratic development of Hungary, as of all other countries, is by way of the

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liquidation of the two confronting cold-war *blocs* and the organisation of security by all co-operating in a wise system, enabling withdrawal of all foreign forces from all lands, a path we must go back to and grimly once more begin pursuing from the start. Recriminations will not help.

This tragedy is essentially a fruit and a heritage of cold war pressures. We shall not honour its victims or avoid recurrence of its like by returning to the vomit that gave it birth. And before we finish assessing the several responsibilities, forget not, please, that of ourselves here in Britain for having failed to end it and even to prevent Eden from going to war.

THE INVASION OF EGYPT

QUAESTOR

LAST February, the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, whose decisions have been recognised as momentous beyond precedent, by friend and foe alike, drew those decisions from its recognition of a new situation in the world. By the side of the Socialist camp numbering some 900 million people—from the German Democratic Republic to China and the Democratic Republics in Korea and Viet Nam—there was now a group of non-Socialist and non-imperialist States in Europe and Asia, equally interested in peace (their populations add up to another 600 millions). The core of these were the former colonial countries:

> The disintegration of the imperialist colonial system now taking place is a post-war development of world-historic significance. The national liberation struggle of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples has been crowned with great victories: in the past decade more than 1,200 million people, or nearly half the world's population, have been freed from colonial or semi-colonial dependence. The complete abolition of the system of colonialism has now been put on the agenda. The new period in world history which Lenin predicted has arrived, and the peoples of the East are playing an active part in deciding the destinies of the whole world, are becoming a new mighty factor in international relations.

The Congress pointed out what tremendous significance such a change in the balance of world forces implied—particularly for the better chances of peaceful development, not only as between the nations but, by isolating the imperialists, inside individual countries where the overthrow of capitalism has become an urgent condition of human advance. Yet at the same time the Congress warned:

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In these conditions Lenin's thesis that, in so far as imperialism exists, there exists an economic basis for wars, remains of course valid. That is why we must be extremely vigilant. While there is capitalism in the world the forces of reaction, representing the interests of capitalist monopolies, will persist in military gambles and aggression and may try to start another war.

The Anglo-French invasion of Egypt which began on October 31 is all-too-brutal confirmation of this analysis. Earlier articles in these pages have dealt with the preparation for this attack from the end of July, when the Egyptian Government nationalised the Suez Canal Company. Let us only recall the four phases through which those preparations passed, in the homely phrases used recently by the *Manchester Guardian*—the early 'gunboat era' (including the threat to withdraw foreign pilots from the Canal) which failed to frighten the Egyptians: then Premier Menzies of Australia's 'accept it or else' mission (which followed Eden's hand-picked London Conference, from which he excluded Egypt by the simple device of publicly insulting President Nasser on its eve): then the plan 'to put a guinea-pig ship through the Canal, to test the power of the users' association' (which broke down on American opposition): and finally the acceptance by the United Nations and Egypt on October 14 of the 'Six Points' for a reasonable settlement (which Eden unsuccessfully tried to torpedo by tacking on to them the demand that Egypt should accept the Menzies terms).

There matters stood when Israel invaded Egypt on October 29. Not a single step had been taken by Eden to implement the United Nations agreement during the previous fortnight—though a barefaced attempt *was* made to influence the elections in Jordan against Egypt, a few days later, by crowding R.A.F. planes into the country. The attempt failed, because the Arab nations have gone past the stage of intimidation. But within 24 hours of Israel's attack, the British and French Governments presented an ultimatum to Egypt, and when it was rejected began their infamous bombing of Egyptian towns.

The brazen hypocrisy which has attended all Eden's moves in the Middle East was not absent on this occasion. The world was told that it was to 'separate the combatants'—although why in that case the Egyptian Army had to be attacked in its rear, instead of the invading Israeli Army: or why the British forces were not dropped in the path of the Israeli forces: or why a simple warning had not been given to the Israeli Government at Tel-Aviv that Egypt would be backed against aggression, remains a mystery—or rather, would remain one if the real reason for Eden's perfidious

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attack were not obvious. Similarly the world was told that navigation through the Suez Canal was threatened—as though everyone didn't understand that the immediate effect of the Anglo-French invasion would be that, for the first time since July, the Canal would be well and truly blocked in self-defence by the Egyptians. The world was told that British lives were in danger—when the truth is that, a fortnight after the invasion began, not a hair on any British head in Egypt had been harmed.

Above all, the British Government indignantly denied that its piratical attack on Egypt was made in collusion with Israel. Talking of piracy reminds one that exactly sixty years ago the then Tory Government denied with equal fervour that it had any hand in the notorious Jameson Raid on the South African Republics, which was aimed at provoking a full scale British invasion. It took nearly all that time for the truth to emerge, thanks to a Dutch scholar—that the British Prime Minister and Colonial Secretary were fully aware of Jameson's plans. This time we have not had to wait so long. It has been revealed that (i) France and Israel agreed to a joint attack on Egypt between October 13 and 15 (ii) Eden and Selwyn Lloyd met the French Premier and Foreign Minister in Paris on October 16, all advisers being excluded from the room (iii) thereafter French troops, with vehicles camouflaged for the desert, began to be massed in the Marseilles-Toulon area (thus far the *Observer* of November 11, 1956) (iv) on October 28 Israeli senior staff officers were in discussion with French military leaders at the Paris Defence Ministry (*Manchester Guardian,* November 6) (v) the same day a French Socialist leader tried unsuccessfully to warn British Labour leaders that British and French invasion of Egypt was coming (the *Observer* again).

There can be no doubt whatever that the attack on Egypt was planned as a joint operation by the three Governments. And that is believed by the whole world.

What was the real aim? On that, too, there has been little concealment from the start. 'A regime for the Suez Canal which will give, at the least, not less than the safeguards provided for in the 18-Power proposals', wrote the *Daily Telegraph* Diplomatic Correspondent (November 3)—the proposals, we may remark, which had been rejected by the United Nations. 'The Suez Canal cannot, and must not, be solely the concern of the Egyptian Government. That is what all this has been about', said Defence Minister Anthony Head in the House of Commons (November 8). 'Anything short of the complete occupation of the Suez Canal may leave our

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cause a long way from victory . . . the United Nations force must not be allowed to withdraw before a long-term settlement is reached, both of the Suez Canal affair on the lines of the original 18-nation scheme and of the future of Israel' (*Sunday Times* leading article, November 11). Both the newspapers quoted here are particularly faithful echoes of the diehard Tories 'running' Eden.

Risk world war for the sake of the Suez Canal shares, someone may ask? No—and that is where the wider view of the world situation comes in. Risk world war in a desperate throw to smash Egypt—an important member of one of the great peace-columns threatening world imperialism! That purpose can be read, thinly veiled, in the outraged outcries in the Tory press after the cease-fire had been forced on Eden—by a threatened split in the Cabinet, according to widely varied sources of information (November 6). 'How to stabilise the Middle East: the longer that is delayed, the more dangerous will the situation become' cries the *Daily Telegraph* (November 9). Dangerous to whom? Not to the Middle East, but to those foreign octopuses who have drained it for so long. 'The plaudits of all Asia are ringing in Colonel Nasser's ears', laments the *Sunday Times* (November 11). All Asia! True, and all Africa too, as United Nations voting showed: in fact, all the peoples recently 'freed from colonial or semi-colonial dependence'—or hoping soon to be freed.

How was the cease-fire forced on Eden, though?

It was not by the votes of the United Nations alone—64 to 5, with 6 abstentions, appealing on November 2 to Britain and France to stop using force: 59 to 5, with 12 abstentions, renewing the appeal two days later: 57 to 0, with 19 abstentions, resolving to set up an international police force, also on November 4. Even at that late hour, after four days' unhindered bombardment of Egypt, the British and French Governments showed what they thought of these appeals. Almost at the very hour, 5 a.m. on November 5, when they were asked by the United Nations Secretary-General to cease their attacks, they began dropping their parachutists instead! Moreover, at times like the present serious Socialists need to be reminded of the class realities behind the United Nations, as beyond doubt they are present in the minds of the warmongering imperialists of Downing Street.

At one pole of the United Nations is the group of Socialist countries, with the U.S.S.R. in the lead—'the real enemy', as the *Daily Express*, the *Economist* and the *Daily Telegraph* have assured us in touching unison. They represent one column of the peace

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movement. Then there are the 26 countries of the Afro-Asian bloc —countries whose social order varies from bourgeois democracy to feudal autocracy, but which in these times are determined not to allow the heel of imperialism on their necks again, for reasons we all know. At the opposite pole is the United States, with its client dictatorships and kept men in some Latin American countries. Eden well knows that the fury of its moneykings, militarists and politicians is due, not to 'unprovoked aggression' (they committed it themselves in Guatemala only the other day) or in 'contempt for international law' (they have been breaking it every day for years in their backing of the puppet Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan against the real government of China), but to the fact that they were outsmarted in their own ambitions to manoeuvre Egypt into becoming their loyal stooge—as they did with Iran and Turkey. Thus in the large majority of the United Nations Anglo-French imperialism sees either its direct opponents in the struggle to drive back one or other of the two victoriously advancing peace columns—or its rival. The rest are the smaller capitalist countries who, in any conflict between the Great Powers, have always suffered heavily, or know that they will do so in a third world war—or they are the other countries with colonial empires of their own, Belgium and Holland, Portugal and Spain, who alone may be expected to stand with their friends the bigger pirates at this juncture.

When British and French imperialism took up the cudgels against 'all Asia', therefore, they were bound to discount beforehand the line-up against them by Lake Success.

Regrettable though it is to admit it, the same applies, as matters stand, to the unprecedented opposition which broke loose in Great Britain itself. The rise of militant and Socialist sentiment in the trade unions and the Labour Party, which has shown itself in the mounting strike wave during 1956, at the T.U.C. and at the Labour Party Conference, was given full rein in the House of Commons debates, and responded with an avalanche of protest meetings, petitions and resolutions. It drew after it a considerable section of the bourgeoisie itself, as the quite unprecedented outbreak of political dissension in the Universities, Churches and cultural bodies revealed. The giant Labour Party demonstration in London on Sunday, November 4, for 'Law, Not War', opened the eyes of many till then unseeing: not least so, by the conduct of the mounted police in attacking the crowds—a feature which, when the militant rank-and-file had complained of it on previous occasions (for example, under the Labour Government) had only aroused disbeliev-

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ing or cynical contempt among many M.P.s and good-mannered citizens. Britain, certainly, has seethed with opposition, this November, in a way not known since the years 1942-3, of the struggle for the Second Front.

Yet the opposition was hamstrung from the start. From the rank and file the demand for strike action was rising: on November 1, a feature article in the *Daily Herald* heavily underlined Robert Smillie's call when war on Republican Turkey (then not sold to the U.S.A.) was threatening—'anything that organised Labour can do by any means in its power should be done in order to stop this new war'. But then the hammer came down from the National Council of Labour: no strikes for political ends, no demand for action outside Parliament to force the Tory Government to resign. This was followed up by Gaitskell with his memorable appeal—to the Tories: to find some other Tory Prime Minister! As though the Devil would smell sweeter were his name Beelzebub.

Why this strait-jacket on the people? Respect for the Constitution (so scantily respected by the Tories when it suits them)? Yes, but more than that. If you can promote strikes against imperialist aggression, what of Malaya, of British Guiana, of Cyprus? What of the next Labour Government's freedom to defend imperialism? The battle for a Socialist foreign policy has not yet been won in the Labour Party and the trade unions: and that showed itself in Britain in November, 1956, in spite of the wonderful and heartening protests against the attack on Egypt.

What then did turn the scale? On this there is a remarkable consensus of opinion, pointing to the Soviet Notes to Britain and France, Israel and the U.S.A., of November 5. It warned them that the Anglo-French unprovoked war on Egypt—'for the purpose of restoring the regime of colonial slavery' in the Near and Middle East—might spread to other countries and become a third world war. It asked Britain and France how they would like it if, in their turn, they too were attacked by States more powerful than themselves—say, with the use of rocket weapons. It declared that the U.S.S.R. was prepared for the use of naval and air forces, together with the U.S.A. and other United Nations members, to stop aggression, adding: 'We are filled with the determination to crush aggressors and restore peace in the East through the use of force'.

On November 6 *The Times* said it would be 'rash to write it (the Soviet Note) off simply as bluster'. That evening Eden announced the cease-fire. Next morning the *Manchester Guardian* thought it 'highly probable' that the Note had 'some connection' with the

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change of policy: the *Daily Telegraph* admitted it 'must have carried considerable weight with the Cabinet': and the *Daily Herald* called it 'the final blow'. The *Economist* (November 10) called it the 'decisive new development . . . which it was possible neither to accept with a good grace nor to ignore with safety'. By that time Nehru had told the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress that Bulganin's warning had been 'the most decisive factor' leading to the cease-fire (November 9). Earlier still this opinion had been widely expressed in all other countries—Arab countries like Jordan, where Parliament on November 8 passed a vote of thanks to the U.S.S.R.: the U.S.A.: even in France itself, where it came from Mendès-France, no friend of the Soviet Union.

At the time of writing, there is still no certainty that the conditions of the cease-fire accepted by Eden—withdrawal of Anglo-French invading force—are to be observed. There is still the problem of how to return to balance and normality among the Great Powers—without which normal relations in the Middle East can never be established. Three months ago it was pointed out in these columns that Eden had completely ignored the pledge to co-operate with the U.S.S.R. on this very question, embodied in the Anglo-Soviet Declaration of London on April 27. He should be reminded of this.

The Swiss Government on November 6 offered a further way—in its invitation to the Big Four who held the Summit Conference of July, 1955, to meet with India on Swiss territory, to save peace and avert a third world war, 'with all its tragic consequences'—a threat which 'is weighing on mankind'. India and the Soviet Union accepted the proposal: France spoke of her 'very great interest' in it (November 9): Eden said, the same day, that he would 'go anywhere and meet anybody'. Only Eisenhower rejected it for the time being—a salutary reminder that declarations of principle, coming from imperialist statesmen, have to be examined for the class interests behind them. In the light of matters mentioned earlier, it is not difficult to divine that the spokesman of Wall Street wants to see the British and French troops safely out of Suez first, before beginning to bargain.

Yet for the working class the Swiss proposal offers very great advantages: such a meeting would impose the obligation to return to methods of negotiation—particularly those laid down by the United Nations on October 14—and that in itself would be a great gain for the world.

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The invasion of Egypt and its consequences can be turned to the advantage of the working people in this and all other countries, indeed, if the British Labour movement—with its exceptional power—recognises the crime for what it has been: the first great armed attempt of British and French finance-capital (let us hope unsuccessful) to drive back and defeat *one* of the two camps which, in their growth, spell humanity's advance to peace and socialism.

GREEN LIGHT FOR LANDLORDS

KATHERINE HOOD

AT the Llandudno Conference, Mr. Duncan Sandys described his new rent proposals as 'an act of justice and common sense which is long overdue'. Within a few days A. Peachey & Co., a company which owns several thousand rent-controlled properties, had announced the acquisition of a further 1,300 small houses, while the shares of eight leading house property companies had risen in value by £2.4 million in anticipation of higher rents and higher dividends. Before any details were available, it was already clear who stood to gain from Mr. Sandys' 'act of justice'—and who stood to lose.

The new Rent Bill, which constitutes a most savage attack on about six million tenants, must be seen in the context of Tory strategy as a whole. In the first place, for over a year, the government's stated aim has been to 'limit consumer expenditure'—in other words to reduce the spending power of the mass of the people. The quickest, surest and most universal method of bringing this about is to raise rents. In the second place, the Tories are determined to restore house property to its full former status as a field for profitable investment—either direct or indirect.

They have been pursuing this two-fold aim for some years and have already moved a good way towards it. There are in this country about fourteen and a half million dwellings. Of these rather over three million are council dwellings. The combined pressure of reduced housing subsidies and greatly increased interest rates has already led to severe rent increases for most of these council tenants. In this operation, which has been described by Mr. Sandys as that of 'restoring some sanity into housing finance', the gain has gone to the big investors who finance the housing loans. By announcing that subsidies for new housing will in future be confined to slum clearance, the government has now ensured that

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further council house building will be reduced to a trickle, and the way finally cleared for the speculative builder.

Of the remaining eleven and a half million dwellings; it is estimated that nearly five million are by now owner-occupied. Of these some one and a half million are old houses formerly let at controlled rents by private landlords which have since been bought by their present occupiers—sometimes as sitting tenants, but more often in desperation at extortionate prices in return for vacant or part-vacant possession. Many of these houses are dilapidated or even near-slum, and their present occupiers, loaded with heavy repair costs on top of an inflated purchase price, are now being squeezed for higher mortgage payments; in their turn, some of them resort to sub-letting a furnished room or two and squeezing their sub-tenants. Where they bought with part-vacant possession and the rest is occupied by rent controlled tenants they feel cheated because they cannot raise the rent to help pay the mortgage. The winners in this process have been the former landlords who sold the houses at a huge profit and the money-lenders who financed the deal. The losers are the owner-occupiers and their sub-tenants.

There remain six and a half million dwellings of which perhaps six million have hitherto been subject for the most part to the Rent Acts, which means that the landlord could not raise the rent nor could he put the tenant out; he has had to wait for the tenant to leave or die before he could get vacant possession and so put the property up for sale. In the case of these houses, the Rent Acts have certainly limited the landlords' opportunities for making profits—indeed where the repairs have been seriously neglected in the past, and the sanitary inspector is on the war path, there is sometimes no profit left in them, and some small landlords are 'in the red' as a result. These six million houses are now to be subject to ruthless treatment. Raise rents, do away as quickly as possible with security of tenure, establish once more a 'free market' in this sphere where goods—even low quality goods—are still in very short supply, and houses to *let* can once more provide the same profitable opportunities as houses to sell.

Eight hundred thousand of these houses which are in the higher rateable value categories are to be decontrolled straight away. This means that the landlord can charge whatever rent he can get, or give the tenants immediate notice to quit. At the same time all vacant dwellings and all houses whatever their rateable values will be decontrolled as and when they become vacant, here again enabling the landlord to re-let to the highest bidder without security of

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tenure. Those who can think back a quarter of a century when similar measures were operated, and notices to quit, evictions, installing of bailiffs, distraint on furniture and the like were an everyday occurrence will have some idea of precisely what is involved here.

The remaining five million houses will, for the time being only, remain controlled so long as their present tenants stay in them. But with the exception of those who actually occupy slum houses, or where houses are in a sufficiently bad state to enable them to get certificates of disrepair, nearly all tenants will suffer a severe rent increase. It is officially estimated that the *average* increase may be about 10s. a week. It is quite certain that many will have their rents doubled. There will be no specific obligation on the landlord to spend any of the increase on repairs. It is simply a blatant transfer of income out of the tenant's pocket into the landlord's pocket. Tenants—and there are many—who in the past have in sheer desperation done their own repairs and decorations, may well find themselves paying a higher rent for their pains.

It is somewhat incredible that this barefaced attempt to give landlords something for nothing should nevertheless still be justified by Mr. Sandys on the grounds that landlords cannot afford to do repairs. Yet there it is—the same old familiar argument. Repair costs are three times what they were before the war, the rents will not cover them, therefore the repairs are neglected and the nation's 'precious stock of houses' is being allowed to 'degenerate into slums.'

The trouble with this argument is not only that we heard it all before in the twenties and the thirties when rents were pushed up and still repairs were not done, but that we heard it all again only three years ago. The 1954 Act—'operation rescue'—was, we were told, designed to solve precisely this problem of the increased cost of repair. It permitted the landlord a substantial increase in rent *provided* he first spent some money on repairs. What has happened to 'operation rescue'? One landlord in ten has made use of it to increase rents. The landlords concerned are mostly the wealthy property companies* whose houses were already in relatively good repair. Doing well even before 'operation rescue' they are now in clover with dividends rising merrily. 'Operation rescue' did little more than give a bonus to landlords whose houses needed no rescuing in any case.

*For detailed information on some of these companies, see *Labour Research* November issue.

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But nine out of ten landlords have made no use of the 1954 Act. Why not? The answer is quite simple. By and large, landlords do not do repairs whatever rent they may be drawing, and whatever the bribe offered.

Theoretically, a landlord should put aside every year part of the money which he obtains from rent either to carry out repairs immediately or against the day when he will have to do so. In practice only the most exceptional landlords behave in this way. It is far more common to use the whole of the rent as income until suddenly one day the blow falls, repairs are urgently needed, but there is no money in the kitty to do them with.

The clue to this question lies in understanding that no landlord willingly does repairs just because they are needed. He only does them if he thinks it will enable him so to preserve his property as to get more profit out of it in the future—only, that is to say, when repairs appear to be a good investment on which some return can be expected. And even then, he will only do them if he is exceptionally far-sighted and prudent. If not, then he will do no repairs, he will make what money he can while the going is good until he can sell the house to a 'less reputable' landlord who will in turn make what money he can while the going is good until he can sell it to a sucker who will in turn—and so on. Ultimately, of course, the house falls down, or gets demolished as a slum. But houses have a long life, and somewhere in the course of this lengthy process the tenant is suddenly asked to pay more rent on the grounds it doesn't cover the repairs. What answer should the tenant make? The answer that many tenants could make today would run something like this:

'The house I live in has stood here for a hundred years. The tenants who have lived in it have paid for it many times over. It has changed hands more times than anybody can remember and made more money than anybody can record. Successive generations of ground landlords, builders, leaseholders, sub-leaseholders, landlords, sub-landlords, property companies, investment trusts and mortgagors have all made money out of this house at the expense of myself and my predecessors. Even house agents and rent collectors have had their cut. Some did repairs because it suited their pocket and some did no repairs because it suited their pocket. You the sucker, coming at the end of a long line of racketeers tell me you cannot afford to do the repairs. You may be a sucker, but you are not going to make a sucker out of me.'

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It was not, as Mr. Sandys would have us think, the Rent Acts which caused the slums. The Rent Acts have been with us for forty years in one form or another. But our rural slums have been with us for centuries, and our urban slums are as old as the towns themselves, they have been with us ever since industrialisation drove the people off the land. For with industrialisation came the property racket, the endless round of buying and selling, and investing, and mortgaging, the landlords getting rich quick—and small landlords sometimes going under, just as the small businessman sometimes goes under, crushed by the power of big business. Very pathetic it can be too—it is the way of the capitalist world. Bad housing is the product of the private landlord system—the system under which the profit motive is the determining factor and not the tenant's needs. The Rent Acts, first forced through in 1915 by the united strength of the working class movement have curbed the worst excesses of the landlord system, restricted its depredations, and placed house-letting as an investment proposition at a disadvantage as compared with other forms of investment—including other forms of property investment. The object of the new Government proposals is precisely to restore the private landlord system to its former position of strength.

The working class movement will fight to stop this happening. It will fight to keep the Rent Acts because their abolition means a savage cut in the standard of living and the untold misery that goes with insecurity of tenure. But bound up with this fight is another of equal significance—the fight for the abolition of the landlord system altogether. It is in this light that the Labour Party's programme 'Homes for the future' must be seen, for it provides for just that—the beginning of the abolition of the private landlord system, and the taking of all rent controlled dwellings into public ownership.

There are many criticisms that can be made of this programme in detail. The fact is that it tries to grapple with the central problem for the first time in Labour's history and in so doing points the way to the only ultimate solution not only for six million tenants, but indeed for the small landlord himself. When the movement goes into battle on the rents question this time it will not only be fighting a rearguard action to safeguard former victories. It will also be fighting for a new and important step towards the abolition of landlordism and all the degradation caused by landlordism for centuries past.

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LABOUR DISCUSSION FORUM

CONTRIBUTORS *this month include two members of the Labour Party (one a trade union delegate to the October Conference), two of the Communist Party and three of whom we have no information. Two are in engineering and one is a loco man; two are under 30 years of age. Readers have joined issue on Automation, Overtime and the problems of Youth; and a new topic is opened, the important subject of the relations between Colonial and British workers. Readers are asked to keep letters brief; already there is a queue awaiting publication. We also ask to know contributors' organisations (not necessarily for publication). Latest date for the January issue, Thursday, December 6. Address to:—*

THE EDITOR, LABOUR DISCUSSION FORUM,
134 Ballards Lane,
London, N.3.

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Automation: Another View

Most active trade unionists, and certainly all socialists, will agree with Harry Knight's dissatisfaction with the attitude of the T.U.C. General Council and the Labour Party National Executive Committee towards automation. But there agreement stops. Bro. Knight leaps 'across the channel' where, he claims, through automation in Germany, France and Italy, we can be out-produced and out-priced in world markets.

This is a familiar argument, hitherto used to induce workers to work harder and produce more as the only justification for wage increases. Familiar also is the use of the all-embracing 'we'—The Nation—blurring over class divisions, which at Standard's and B.M.C. brought thousands of trade unionists on to the streets and picket-lines to enforce discussions on the elementary 'right to work'. Indeed, the only departure from this 'one big family' idea is Harry Knight's recognition that automation by the big firms brings the expansion of monopoly practices, and his rather surprising concern for the medium and small firms, whose lack of capital prevents their use of automation.

Of course we appreciate the role of automation to give effect to Labour's ideals, but it is all too easy, a hundred years after, to denounce the Luddite Movement and forget that its objective was to prevent the drastic reduction of living standards of hand-producers by the capitalists of that day. The difference from today is only one of degree, when redundant workers are told to accept other jobs at lower wages.

Whilst this is forced upon the trade union movement, the total wage-bill extracted from the employing class has diminished, and this in return for even greater production. Indeed, the exploitation of the working class is increased in double fashion, for whilst one section of the employers pay a lower number of wages, the displaced workers

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seeking jobs elsewhere undermine the Labour market; and wages as a whole will fall. This can only be regarded as a defeat for the trade union movement. We are not here concerned with Labour's ideals, but with bread and butter.

This raises sharply Harry Knight's qualification for the acceptance and rapid development of automation—'if properly planned and controlled'.

'Socialist planning and control of automation' is called for in A.S.S.E.T.'s resolution accepted at the Labour Party Conference. In the same sentence it accepts redundancy with 'adequate compensation'. My own Union's policy (Amalgamated Engineering Union) is for retention on the payroll pending alternative work without loss of earnings, and this is a true expression of socialist planning. Lest this is considered as 'uneconomic' and affecting prices in the world markets, I hasten to indicate other means of ensuring reasonable prices. The recent case of the despatch clerk who stole a complete car by sending parts piece-meal to his own address, involved a claim by B.M.C. for £812. Judicious questioning by the Defence revealed the amount as £200 because prices are fixed on a basis of Cost plus 300 per cent. The maintenance and improvement of the earnings level (with the release of the credit squeeze) is also important to increase the home market, which can reduce unit production costs for the market as a whole.

Automation with a reduced labour force has increased production capacity of the automobile industry in the United States, but actual production, at $6\frac{1}{4}$ millions, is less than the previous year. Nevertheless, $6\frac{1}{4}$ millions can be produced more rapidly and therefore more cheaply, but prices were actually increased. Thus the greater exploitation of a reduced labour force can bring greater profits from less sales. The difference between these methods is simply a difference of workers' living standards.

Only under public ownership can automation benefit the whole community. In the meantime it is the urgent task of the unions to use their full strength to maintain full employment through shorter hours at improved wage levels. This urgency is grasped, for example, by the shop stewards of the motor and ancillary trades who are already collaborating with shop stewards 'across the channel'. An international conference of shop stewards on automation is in the immediate offing. It should also be pointed out that those firms quoted as the main competitors in Europe are either publicly owned or state-controlled.

NORMAN DINNING.

*London, N.*15.

'Overtime ban? Don't tell me!'

I had to smile at the bit on *That Overtime Question*. Tell R.B., Acton, from me that he is dead right in doubting that 'an arbitrary call from the top banning excessive overtime' would be fully obeyed. Let's face it; it would not be obeyed at all. Take my case. I'm not a tradesman; I'm a fitter's mate, hired out in a gang by a contractor to do maintenance jobs; shifting machinery in factories where they are re-tooling, or preparing for automation. The job may last a week to a year; it may be round the corner, in Bradford or in Eastbourne. At the moment—mind, it can't last—I've got a real good job; seven days a week, plenty of overtime. It works out at 83 hours. Knock off the 18 hours travelling time, though, and it brings it down to under ten actual

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working hours a day; but with Sunday double time it is better than it looks. All right, cut out the overtime, and how about this: an out-of-London job, with only 12s. allowance and an hour's travelling time above my 44 hours—that leaves under £9. Just try to get digs and send enough money home out of that lot. Three months of a job of that kind put me right back. Now this 83 hours a week job gives me a chance to pull up, and about time too. I just get by now, keeping the wife and two kiddies under school age—and there's another on the way—and paying off the debts I ran into on that rotten three months without overtime. Mind you; no motor bike, no television, no outings; just smokes and the odd glass of beer. And this week, because I got my pay packet a day late, the wife had to borrow a quid from upstairs.

Of course, there's always an alternative. For the next couple of months at least the wife could go out to work, if we could get the kids minded. She'd get 3s. an hour perhaps. But if you get down to hard economic facts, this wouldn't make any real difference; because to manage as a household the wife and I between us have to do 80 to 90 hours a week. I could cut out the overtime, lean back and let her go out to work. Well, we'd rather I worked overtime and the wife looked after the kids; the little girl is delicate. Don't think I enjoy over-working myself. Anyway, I'm crafty; I don't kill myself at it. Besides, that suits the boss, too. The more men he has on and the longer the job takes, the more he may be making; because his contract is to supply men, and he gets paid for the number of hours we work. So sometimes when the job looks like finishing up a bit soon, the idea somehow gets put about that the boss isn't going to break his heart if we spin it out a bit. (And he hasn't broken it yet.) As for the firms he contracts with, they are only too glad for him to have all the labour trouble on these special jobs. It saves them carrying staff maintenance men in a big way, with trouble when they want to pay them off. Besides, though it may not be highly skilled work pushing machines about, the more practice you have had the less mess you make of it. My boss is a kind of private labour exchange, taking a sizeable rake off for trading in other people's labour. He is like the slave dealer of olden days, except that he sells us by the day or week instead of for life, and of course we get a bit of the purchase price.

I have nothing against your R.B.: he means well. Don't think I'm against the union, either. Everyone would be much worse off without it, union and non-union men alike. I don't have to be told that my rate doesn't go up of itself. But until the basic rate is forced up at least 75 per cent, what can I do? I don't *like* overtime; I just have to have it. You don't need to tell me, neither, that this 'full employment' is only a 'temporary phase'; nor about the risk to health. I am 28 and I was born in South Wales, where my father is still living; he has miner's chest. I was down just a while back and could see things are already slowing up there. Well, that will be a new 'phase'. Meanwhile the present phase is supposed to be: 'We never had it so good'. Please, keep the bull for the army.

My mate doesn't think the union can do much good; that it can't push the basic rate up fast enough, and the best thing is to keep prices down, is his line. How? Ah, now you're asking. Then again, with plenty of fines to come, he is one of the scores

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of thousands who stay away from union branch meetings. It's a vicious circle; there may be plenty of other reasons for non-attendance, but that's one of them. All right, I don't agree with him; but you tell me—you and R.B.—just what am I to do?

J. EVANS.

London, N.W.

Youth Chained Down

There is today a consistent fear among the political parties and the trade unions that the younger generation have no interest in taking an active part in the Labour movement and are content to just 'rock 'n' roll'. Even in the early months of 1955 the adult railway worker feared the supposed lack of class consciousness of his younger fellow worker. Everyone now knows just how wrong they were. The young firemen of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen were out solid even more than their older members. Whether the lead given by the A.S.L.E.F. leaders was right or wrong, it does show that youth have not forsaken the history of the working class and will fight just as strongly as their fathers did.

Today he suffers from oppression just as his father before him, though now he hasn't to starve but to die to uphold the capitalist system of society. For eight years he has been exploited as cheap forced labour, used to combat the ever-growing working class struggles in the colonial territories and in Britain itself; and, though he may not see it in this sense, he realises instinctively that his freedom is being taken away from him even more than before.

The Labour Party has put forward a policy for youth; but though it might have some good points it is useless while they continue to ignore the class issue of National Service. The Communist Party, like the Labour Party, striving to build a strong youth membership and of greater importance as believers in Marxism, still only call for a reformist policy on National Service. They want the National Servicemen to serve only in Britain, supposedly so to defeat strikers at home whilst the professional soldiers continue to suppress our colonial brothers. The growing revolt of youth against exploitation in the form of National Service has recently culminated in the mutinous incidents of recalled reservists. Now we are faced with class struggle, having a leadership unable to rally the majority of the working class on a correct policy.

Whether we call ourselves communists or socialists we all want to bring about a new scientific system of society in place of the present decadent system. Yet we continue to ignore the fact that the suppression of the colonial territories is the bulwark of capitalism, not only in Britain but other key countries as well. We ignore the fact that National Service is the only way in which capitalism can now suppress the colonial workers; and that only in the abolishment of National Service can the Colonial and British working class strengthen their fight to overcome capitalism. We who ignore these facts are betraying the strongest and most progressive forces of the working class—the youth. Let us break the chains of National Service holding our youth down and so enable them to get back into the struggle on the home front.

DONALD HALLSWORTH.

Birmingham 7.

(A.S.L.E.F., Stetchford L.P.)

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Colonies and Wages

The most important issue at this moment, and which will remain so until British imperialism is completely smashed, is the attitude of the British Labour movement towards the colonial national liberation movements.

The major error, pursued by the left political parties in Britain, has been that they tend to isolate emphasis on the need to fight to maintain present living standards as the No. 1 priority over all other issues. Events are showing that if we do not lay more emphasis on the defeat of imperialism, our fight to maintain present living standards will be greatly weakened. The British working class must come out, without delay, through their trade union and political organisations, in support of all peoples who are struggling to liberate themselves from British imperialism. Imperialism *will* be defeated but the attitude of the liberated colonial peoples towards Britain will be governed by the support extended to them by the organised labour movement here. If, in their struggle for liberation and independence the peoples of the Middle East are forced to destroy the oil wells or the Suez Canal one now begins to appreciate how disastrous this is for our economy.

In our own interests it is imperative that the British Labour movement takes positive action to defeat the Tory Government's schemes for maintaining their financial and imperial power by military force or threats. I am convinced that this can be done, providing explanations are made of the true position and there is a call from trade union and political leaders throughout the country. All trade union and political leaders who support reactionary policies of the Tory Government must be exposed for what they are. The position of the Tory Government can be made untenable, with the prospect for an early general election and a return of a strong Labour Government. A switch must then be made in our international alliances. We must draw closer to the countries travelling the Socialist road and make it quite clear to all that that is the road we intend to travel. Our relations with the colonial countries must undergo a complete change and equal status be recognised by the new Labour Government.

BOB HENDERSON.

Bristol.

Putting it briefly . . .

Suppression in this tiny town is terrific. It is impossible to order locally any Soviet paper, magazine or book. We need education, not for the illiterate but for the mis-led, mis-informed and those 'hypnosed' by fear. I gained much from the letter-writers to this Forum, and thank each one.—*M.B., Yorks.*

Latin America seems to be somewhat neglected. I wonder if there are many readers of L.M. like myself who would like to study an article devoted to Brazil?—*J. McC., Edinburgh.*

Accumulation of capital in a 'mixed' economy functioning under a progressive government with combined Labour-Communist support needs to be studied. We have some experience of the 'Budget surplus' policy of the 1945 Labour Government which seems to have been largely inspired by the late Sir Stafford Cripps, and

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we have seen this type of policy exploited by the Tories for their own purposes. We know how effective a 'scare' stunt is, like 'the threat to the savings of the poor' campaign; and also how vulnerable are the jobs of the wage-earner to 'no confidence' moves by the holders of capital. An effective answer to these questions with a clear-cut policy which progressively transferred capital from private hands into social channels, without the necessity for complete nationalisation, and in a manner which was understood by the people as a whole, could perhaps assist the peaceful transfer of power.—*C.G.R., Essex.*

Nationalisation. A Labour Government should include the extension of nationalisation to those forms of industry which are most suitable for ownership, where it is technically advanced and where change of ownership involves little dislocation to industry. Such industries would include iron and steel, cement, chemicals, road transport and others. This to be the prelude to the greatest degree of nationalisation. In such a way the nationalised sector of industry would be larger than private enterprise and give to the Government greater powers of control and development of our economy as a whole, and lead to more thorough planning of exports and imports. In essence, that is a controlled economy in the interests of the nation.

To some it may sound old fashioned—but Socialism means the public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, for the purposes of the quickest technical advance, and thus providing to all the community the highest possible standard of living. Nationalisation has not failed. It has been a success, not a failure. It is true it is far from perfect. But it has certainly given to the country advantages which would have never come under private enterprise. The biggest problem in a policy of nationalisation is the one of the degree of compensation.—*M.F., Barry.*

The policy of a Labour Government should be based on (1) peace; (2) self-government for colonies; and (3) the development and extension of nationalisation. In pursuance of peace it should be Labour's duty always to take the initiative in every phase of disarmament in agreement with other nations, using the machinery of the United Nations to the full. Self-government for all colonial areas should be followed with diligence and as a result better relations could be built up. If Army, Navy and Air Force bases still remain a necessity, they could be based upon confidence and respect, Nationalisation should be extended to all the main industries, giving government control over the major portion of our economic life, and giving greater impetus to technical developments and automation.—*H.F.T., South Wales.*

★

This month's prize of ONE GUINEA *is awarded to J. Evans for his controversial letter,* 'OVERTIME BAN? DON'T TELL ME!'

Published by the Proprietors, The Trinity Trust, 134, Ballards Lane, London, N.3, and printed by Wembley News, Wembley, Middlesex, Great Britain. Registered for transmission by Magazine Post to Canada, including Newfoundland.

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